

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A provider transfer server which provides a predetermined service for a user node, the server comprising:

a first communication unit which serves as an access point connected from the user node;

a second communication unit which connects the server to any one of access points owned by a plurality of connection service providers;

a detection unit which detects a connection service state of a plurality of the connection service providers;

a selection unit which selects a connection service provider based on the state detected by said detection unit and which instructs said second communication unit to get connected to an access point of the connection service provider selected; and

a communication channel establishing unit which establishes a communication channel between said first and second communication units in the event that said second communication unit is connected to the access point of the selected connection service provider.

2. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, further comprising a unit which registers in advance a user's preference for a connection service provider to be selected, wherein said selection unit chooses a connection service

provider according to the user's preference, based on the state detected by said detection unit.

3. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein said selection unit selects a connection service provider whose lines are relatively open at the time said detection unit detects the state.

4. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 2, wherein said selection unit selects a connection service provider whose lines are relatively open at the time said detection unit detects the state.

5. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein said selection unit selects a connection service provider whose connection fee is relatively low, at the time said detection unit detects the state.

6. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 2, wherein said selection unit selects a connection service provider whose connection fee is relatively low, at the time said detection unit detects the state.

7. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:

a recording unit which records sessions where the

communication channel is established for the connection service provider, for each connection service provider; and

a charge unit which calculates a service fee incurred by a user for each connection service provider, based on data of the session recorded by said recording unit.

8. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein said second communication unit and a plurality of the connection service providers are connected in an area more local than the Internet.

9. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:

a unit which supplies the detected state to a terminal of the user node; and

an acquisition unit which acquires, from the user node, an instruction on selection of the connection service provider,

wherein said selection unit selects the connection service provider by referring to the instruction.

10. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 7, wherein said charge unit calculates, for each user node, an allotted charge due to a connection fee paid to the connection service provider by an operator of the provider transfer server on behalf of the user nodes, based on the data of the session.

11. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 8, wherein said charge unit calculates, for each user node, an allotted charge due to a connection fee paid to the connection service provider by an operator of the provider transfer server on behalf of the user nodes, based on the data of the session.

12. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 9, wherein said charge unit calculates, for each user node, an allotted charge due to a connection fee paid to the connection service provider by an operator of the provider transfer server on behalf of the user nodes, based on the data of the session.

13. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:

an authenticating unit which authenticates that the user node is a legitimate user of the provider transfer server; and

an authentication data supplying unit which, upon request of authentication from the connection service provider, supplies data necessary for the requested authentication, wherein the provider transfer server is regarded as a user by the connection service provider.

14. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein said selection unit includes a transceiver gate having an

output disable terminal in the event that a path between said first communication unit and said second communication unit is of a digital signal path.

15. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein said selection unit includes a transfer gate in the event that a path between said first communication unit and said second communication unit is an analog signal path.

16. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein there are provided a plurality of said second communication units which are permanently connected to respective internet service providers, whereby said selection unit selects said second communication units.

17. A provider transfer server as recited in Claim 1, wherein prior to or after establishment of a connection between the user node and the provider transfer server, the detection unit accesses each internet service provider so as to obtain the latest data on the internet service providers.

18. A method of providing a provider transfer service, the method comprising:

detecting, at a proper timing, a connection service state in a plurality of connection service providers which provide connection services to network;

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    receiving a request in which a user node requests to
get connected to the network;

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selecting a connection service provider according to the state detected; and

relaying a communication between the connection
service provider thus selected and the user node,

wherein an intermediary process is performed in a manner such that the provider transfer service is treated as a user, by the connection service provider thus selected while the user node is treated as a user by the provider transfer service.